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Pennsylvania Historical and
Museum Commission.
Pennsbury Manor

PENNSYLVANIA TRAIL OF HISTORY



PENNSBURY MANOR

A Re-Creation at the Site of
William Penn's Manor House

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William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania and its great lawgiver, built a beautiful manor house, Pennsbury, on the Delaware River northeast of Philadelphia. Despite the eminence of its builder, this house, in which Penn lived during his second visit to the Province, 1699 to 1701, was allowed to fall into ruin during the years after his departure.

To recreate the world of the Founder and to convey a picture of his mind, spirit, and ideals, the manor house of William Penn has been recreated on its original foundations on the *Pennsylvania Trail of History*, east of Tullytown.

William Penn created his great social experiment, the Province of Pennsylvania, in the belief that men, animated by Godly principles and free of oppression, could live together in peace, could prosper, and could grow in the arts of living. Therefore, citizens were to be governed by men of their own choosing, and all religious faiths were to be welcome.

Despite this, Penn was still the Proprietor, empowered by a semi-feudal arrangement to collect an annual quitrent on each piece of land sold to a settler. Pennsbury reflected this singular position which Penn held in the Provincial establishment. It also reflected his wealthy background and his rather exquisite taste, which set him apart from most Quakers of that time.

In 1681 Penn, an acknowledged leader of the Quaker movement and a friend at court, as had been his father, Admiral Sir William Penn, received the Charter for Pennsylvania from King Charles II. A year later Penn arrived in his colony, but he remained for only two years. Illness, financial worries, and threats to Pennsylvania's charter kept him from the tranquil enjoyment of his home, now abuilding on the Delaware River.

Pennsbury reflected the Founder's ideas. He was born in London, where his father maintained

a town house, but he spent much of his time on the family's estates in Ireland. In this way he was able to draw a comparison, favorable to country life.

He loved the land and soil, and he became imbued with the idea that his children should likewise. During his first visit to America, 1682 to 1684, he wrote his wife, Gulielma, in England, "Let my children be husbandmen and housewives" and requested, "a few fruit trees of the Lord Sunderland's gardener's raising out of his rare collection."



Gulielma had remained in England and was preparing to follow him with their children and the household retinue. Unfortunately, Penn was forced to return to England before the house could be completed. His wife was never to see the New World.

Before leaving Pennsylvania, Penn selected James Harrison to oversee the construction and planting at Pennsbury. During his absence he wrote a constant stream of letters to Harrison describing his ideas for the gardens, the grounds, and the house. These letters, the artifacts and pieces of building material found in and around the old foundations, and a knowledge of contemporary architecture guided the work of re-creation. The work was completed in 1939.

The Proprietor returned to Pennsylvania in 1699, and in the spring of 1700 moved to Pennsbury with his second wife, Hannah, their new baby, John, "the American," born in Philadelphia, and his grown daughter, Letitia. Penn spent many happy days here, although his wife was unhappy so far from home. He received many guests, white and Indian. It was a large house, full of servants, handsome furniture, and good things for the dining table. Financial difficulties forced the Penns to return to England in 1701. They did not return to Pennsylvania.

THE FURNISHINGS

Pennsbury Manor is beautifully furnished in seventeenth-century antiques, typical of the furnishings that Penn most likely owned. Two inventories of furnishings tell us something of his taste. It is well to bear in mind that this furniture represents a period seventy-five to one hundred years earlier than our American Revolution, and an earlier style is, of course, reflected. This is the largest collection of seventeenth-century furniture in Pennsylvania.

OUTBUILDINGS

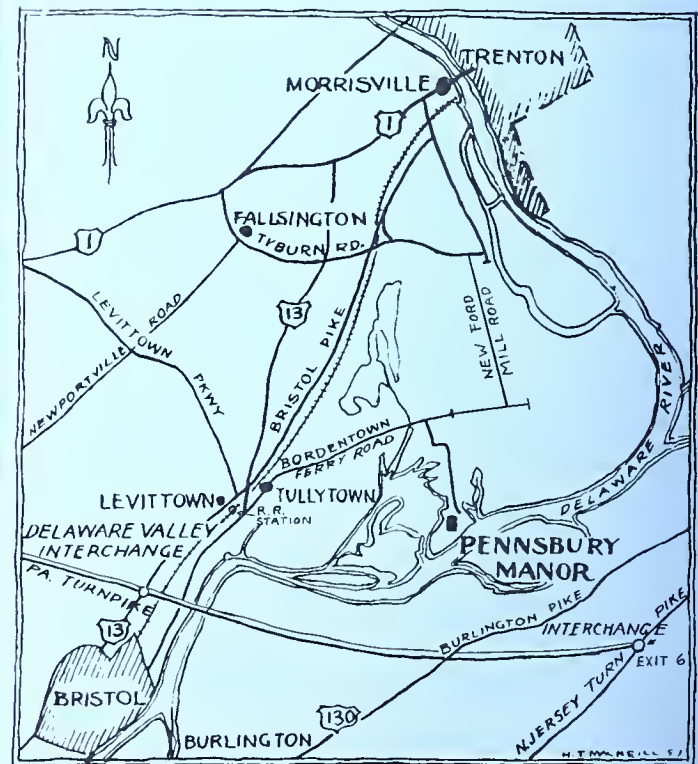
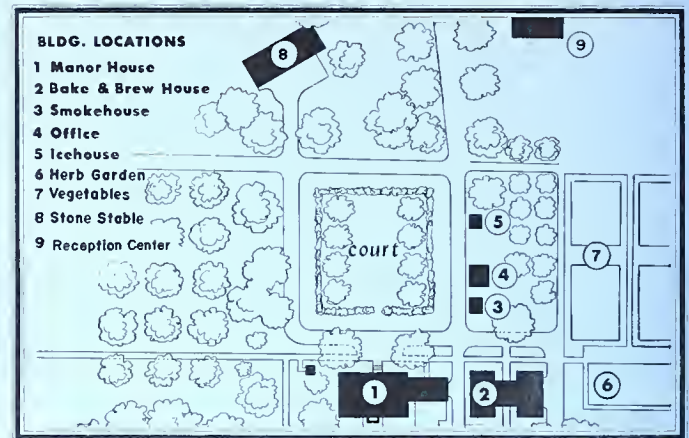
Pennsbury was a self-supporting plantation located in a wilderness twenty-five miles above Philadelphia, and of necessity numerous outbuild-

ings were a part of the plan. Today the visitor may see the bake and brew house, where many of the domestic activities were carried on, a smoke house, plantation office, ice house, and a stone stable. Some of these are conjectural.

THE GARDENS

Penn developed a fine garden and orchard at Pennsbury. The most skilled gardeners were sent out from both England and Scotland.

He was ever mindful of the great variety of shrubs and trees indigenous to the Province and instructed his gardeners to go into the woods and get these plants for his gardens. Penn returned from his official visit to the Governor of Maryland with native shrubs and trees from that colony and had them planted with care at Pennsbury. Native plants were, of course, supplemented by a large variety of flowers, shrubs, and trees that he had known in England. There are references, carefully noted, in his expense account for walnut, hawthorn, and hazel trees as well as fruit trees sent out from England and a considerable variety of seeds and roots. Penn brought, on his second visit to the Province, as is reported in his diary, eighteen roses from London.



Visiting Hours

DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME: 8:30 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.
weekdays; 1:00 to 5:00 P.M. Sunday.

WINTER: 9:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. weekdays;
1:00 to 4:30 P.M. Sunday.

Hours subject to change.

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